

**THE INFLUENCE OF EMOTIONAL
INTELLIGENCE TOWARDS ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT AMONG GIFTED STUDENTS
IN SAUDI ARABI**

by

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**PENGARUH KECERDASAN EMOSI TERHADAP PENCAPAIAN
AKADEMIK DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR PINTAR DI ARAB SAUDI**

ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan ini mengkaji pengaruh kecerdasan emosi (EI) terhadap pencapaian akademik pelajar pintar di Arab Saudi. Secara khususnya, kajian ini mengkaji pengaruh daripada kesedaran diri, kawalan diri, motivasi, empati dan kemahiran sosial terhadap pencapaian akademik pelajar pintar. Perbincangan dalam kajian ini adalah berdasarkan rangka kerja teori daripada teori kecerdasan emosi Goleman (1995). Teori tersebut dianggap sesuai bagi kajian ini kerana ia membolehkan pembaca memahami bagaimana pencapaian akademik secara signifikannya boleh dipengaruhi oleh EI. Seramai 150 responden yang terdiri daripada pelajar pintar lelaki dan perempuan terlibat dalam kajian kuantitatif. Sementara itu, seramai 10 orang guru dan 30 pelajar pintar dijemput untuk ikut serta dalam kajian kualitatif. Soal selidik dan protokol temu bual adalah instrumen yang digunakan untuk mengumpul data bagi kajian kualitatif dan kuantitatif, masing-masing. Regresi pelbagai digunakan untuk menganalisis dan menginterpretasi data kuantitatif, terutamanya pengaruh EI (kesedaran diri, kawalan diri, motivasi, empati dan kemahiran sosial) terhadap pencapaian akademik pelajar pintar. Teknik ini juga diaplikasikan dengan saiz kesan untuk menentukan elemen EI yang merupakan peramal terbaik bagi pencapaian pelajar. Ujian T disesuaikan untuk mengenal pasti perbezaan EI yang signifikan dalam kalangan pelajar berdasarkan jantina. Dua hipotesis utama yang dicadangkan diuji dengan data kuantitatif. Sementara itu,

konsep kesedaran diri, kawalan diri, motivasi, empati dan kemahiran sosial diteroka melalui data kualitatif dengan melakukan analisis tematik dalam cara kualitatif manual untuk menyediakan cadangan daripada guru bagi menambah baik EI pelajar pintar di Arab Saudi. Keputusan kajian menunjukkan kesan faktor EI terhadap pencapaian akademik pelajar dan perbezaan tahap EI di antara pelajar lelaki dan perempuan. Saranan dan cadangan kajian ini akan bermanfaat terhadap para guru pelajar pintar, perancang pendidikan, agensi antarabangsa (cth: UNESCO, UNICEF dan UNDP), pertubuhan bukan kerajaan (NGO) dalam usaha mereka untuk menambah baik EI pelajar pintar di Arab Saudi.

**THE INFLUENCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TOWARDS
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AMONG GIFTED STUDENTS IN SAUDI
ARABIA**

ABSTRACT

This research examined the influence of emotional intelligence (EI) on the academic achievement of gifted students in Saudi Arabia. In particular, it investigated the influence of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills on the academic achievement of gifted students. The discussion in this study was based on the theoretical framework of Goleman's (1995), emotional intelligence theory, Mayer and Salovey's model (1995), achievement motivation theory and gender schema theory. These theories were deemed to be appropriate for the current study because they allow the readers to understand how academic achievement could be significantly influenced by EI. One hundred fifty respondents consisting of both male and female gifted students were involved in the quantitative study. Meanwhile, 10 teachers and 30 gifted students were invited to participate in the qualitative study. Questionnaires and interview protocol were the instruments used to gather data for the quantitative and qualitative studies, respectively. Multiple regressions was used to analyze and interpret the quantitative data, particularly the influence of EI (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills) on the academic achievement of gifted students. This technique was also applied with the effect size to determine the EI elements that could best predict the academic achievement of students. T-test was adopted to identify the significant difference of EI among the students based on gender. The two main hypotheses

proposed were tested with the quantitative data. Meanwhile, the concepts of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills were explored with the qualitative data by performing a thematic analysis in a manual qualitative manner to provide suggestions from the teachers for improving the EI of gifted students in Saudi Arabia. Results of the study demonstrated the effect of EI factors on the academic achievement of the students and the difference in the EI level between male and female pupils. The suggestions and recommendations of this study would benefit the teachers of gifted students, educational planners, government, international agencies (e.g., UNESCO, UNICEF, and UNDP), and nongovernmental organizations in their efforts to improve the EI of gifted students in Saudi Arabia.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In the current century, emotional intelligence (EI) and academic achievement are perceived differently than how they have been viewed previously. Moreover, traditional theories on EI have been gradually replaced by newly developed ones. In addition to analyzing the reasoning capabilities of students (student-centered curriculum), the present theories also consider their other qualities, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Abisamra, 2000). Goleman's emotional intelligence theory (1995), posits that intelligence quotient (IQ) is not the only measure of success and that EI also plays a major role in the success of a person, more specifically in the academic achievement of gifted students (Goleman, 1995). The current study aims to examine the influence of EI on the academic achievement of gifted students in Saudi Arabia. It intends to determine whether high achievers in intermediate schools have a high EI level and if their achievement is linked to their EI.

Students worldwide face a wave of global pressure in terms of their EI and academic achievement that requires attention (Abisamra, 2000), and they control their emotions in a manner that should also be recognized (Abisamra, 2000). Adolescence, which is a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, involves numerous changes and is therefore a psychologically intriguing stage of development. Adolescents experience rapid maturational changes, shifting societal demands, conflicting role demands, increasingly complex social relationships, and

new educational expectations (e.g., Montemayor, Adams, & Gullotta, 1990; Wigfield, Byrnes, & Eccles, 2006). These intense changes have prompted several researchers to consider adolescence as a time of challenge that can potentially induce both positive and negative outcomes.

Thomas (2011), indicated that EI has been considered a base requirement for maintaining a state of inner harmony, the most important feature of IQ. This factor explains why EI is the most popular among those with a scientific bent of mind, and it has a “structural” basis in the form of brain circuitry that is primarily inherited or genetical (Thomas, 2011). Thus, the concept of IQ provides a biological foundation for the study of personality and individual differences. IQ also enhances the confidence of individuals in dealing with the challenges of living and learning in educational institutions. Researchers have argued that EI is linked to the learning process of students (Goleman, 1996; Elias, Ubrico, Reese et al., 1992; Svetlana, 2007). Preti (2013), examined the factors that affect the development of EI and the role of these factors in the academic achievement of students, and reported that EI and academic achievement are correlated with the teaching practices that promote emotional and social skills among students.

The EI and academic achievement of gifted students in Saudi Arabia have become an increasing source of concern within the Saudi education sector (Alqefari, 2010). This concern has been attributed to the significant role played by education in national development. Facilitating the appropriate provisions for gifted and talented students is important to the development of any functioning society (Alqefari, 2010). The academic achievements of Saudi Arabian gifted students do not satisfy expectations, a condition that has affected the societal development of the country.

Correspondingly, the major challenge faced by the Saudi general education system is improving the quality of education, such that the graduates of the system have the skills and knowledge that could match the demands of the labor market (Aljughaiman & Grigorenko, 2013; Prokop, 2003). The country requires intelligent and creative individuals who can design new inventions and open new horizons to advance the technological and scientific sectors. These individuals must also remain competitive in the fast-paced developing world. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has recently focused on the important role of this special group.

The influence of emotional intelligence theory on academic achievement is further supported by longitudinal study. Blackwell, Trzesniewski, and Dweck (2007), argued that as gifted children develop, they begin to form beliefs about how intelligence may function in themselves and others. The perception of gifted children toward intelligence may include assumptions about the definition of being smart and whether intelligence is based on one's effort, innate ability, or knowledge that could either expand or remain constant. Blackwell et al. (2007), further observed that when students were introduced to the theory of intelligence, they form unique interpretations of and responses to academic situations, particularly in the face of challenges. These differing mindsets influence the reasons students attribute to their academic failures, the manner of in which they positively perceive effort, the types of goals they set for themselves, their reactions to challenges and failures, and their overall academic achievement. Aronson, Fried, and Good (2002), taught incremental theory to college students and compared these students with two control groups, namely, the no-treatment group and the group that was taught a version of the multiple intelligences model of ability (Gardner, 1983). Compared with the no-

treatment control group, the grades of the students that were taught incremental theory or training group were higher, which subsequently influenced their Scholastic Assessment Test scores. In another study, Good, Aronson, and Inzlicht (2003), reported that an incremental theory intervention significantly improved the achievement test scores of the adolescents that were taught incremental theory or training group compared with those in the control group.

According to (Dweck, 2009) students' theories of intelligence are their beliefs about the nature and workings of their intellect. Some students believe that their intelligence is a fixed trait that they have been given a certain amount of intelligence and that is that. This is called an entity theory of intelligence, and students with this view become very concerned with how much intelligence they have. Other students believe that their intelligence is a quality they can develop through their effort and education. This is called an *incremental* theory of intelligence, and students with this view are more focused on learning and becoming smarter. Each theory affects not only students' motivation to learn but also their success in learning and their achievement in school ((Dweck, 2006; Dweck, 2000).

1.2 Background of the Study

This study aims to examine the influence of EI on the academic achievement of gifted students in Saudi Arabia. Human accomplishments result from the reciprocal influences of external circumstances and a host of personal determinants, including endowed potentialities, acquired competencies, reflective thought, and a high level of self-initiative (Bandura, 1986). The emerging motivational issues have increased the attention of researchers in the field of gifted and talented studies (Robinson, 1996).

However, theoretically analyzing the motivational processes associated with gifted performance is a difficult task. First, giftedness is an elusive and controversial construct that can neither be easily defined nor measured (Gallagher, 1996; Tannenbaum, 1996). Even when the focus is narrowed to the intellectually and academically gifted students, researchers continue to face the issue of interpreting gifted performance. Is giftedness the result of genetically endowed ability, developmental precocity, or the effect of an enriched environment and dedicated effort? Researchers in the fields of education and psychology perceive giftedness differently (Gallagher & Courtright, 1986). Some researchers include motivation as part of the definition of giftedness (Feldhusen, 1986; Renzulli, 1986). Meanwhile, others regard giftedness as a set of genetically based aptitudes developed into special talents through personal and social catalysts, including achievement motivation (Gagne, 1995). Thus, we are dealing with a population and a construct that have not been clearly defined (Sternberg & Davidson, 1986). The current study also aims to determine whether the five elements of EI, namely, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, could contribute to academic achievement (Shipley, Jackson, & Segrest, 2010).

Academic achievement is subject to different theoretical views and methods of assessment. Consistent with the history of motivation theories and research, the early studies on the academic achievement of gifted students relate motivation to personality traits. These investigations also use certain terms, such as “energy level,” “enthusiasm” (Halpin, Payne, & Ellert, 1975), “zeal,” and “motivational vigor” (Freehill & McDonald, 1981), and emphasize the need for achievement and perseverance (Zilli, 1971). The motivational models from cognitive theories have

recently been adopted. These models reflect a trend from a trait approach to a focus on cognitive and affective processes that influence achievement behaviors (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Clinkenbeard (1996), suggested that motivation research on gifted education has two categories; one category focuses on motivation as a stable personality trait, and the other focuses on motivation as an environmentally induced transitory state (Kenrick & Funder, 1988).

The search for a deeper understanding of human intelligence began in the early 1900s when Binet (1916). Started administering intelligence tests to school-age children in France (Labby, Lunenburg, & Slate, 2012). France had radically changed its education philosophy by mandating that all children aged 6 to 14 years attend school. Binet aimed to develop a measure that would help determine the differences between normal and subnormal children. His research assistant, Simon, helped him develop a test for measuring intelligence (Binet & Simon, 1915, 1916). In 1911, after two revisions, the Binet–Simon Intelligence Scale was finally used worldwide (Terman, 1916). In 1918, the United States became the first country in the world to administer large-scale intelligence testing to its army recruits (Palter, 2014). Between 1920 and 1935, researchers at Stanford University administered thousands of eugenic tests of intelligence and personality traits to Chinese–American and Japanese–American children in the public schools in California (Palter, 2014).

Goleman (1998), was the first to direct research and theoretical attention toward EI. He formulated a theory for this type of intelligence in 1995 through his first book on EI. In his theory, Goleman confirmed that academic, personal, and professional success cannot be fulfilled if the person does not acquire emotional and

social skills (Elias, 1997). Emotional intelligence includes two fields, namely, personal and social competences.

Blackwell et al. (2007), observed that when students transitioned to junior high school, their EI became a significant predictor of their achievement in mathematics. Moreover, the EI of gifted students at the beginning of junior high school is more likely to improve math grades earned at the end of the second year of junior high school, controlling for the effect of math achievement test scores before entering junior high school. Thus, math grades earned in the first term of junior high school were used instead of end of sixth-grade test scores.

Similar to non-gifted students, gifted students face emotional issues; however, they may suffer from a heightened self-awareness compared with non-gifted students. Moreover, gifted students may be excessively critical of what they can do and achieve. Therefore, gifted students may have low self-esteem or low perception of their abilities, which can induce underachievement because they may fear failure (Diaz, 1998).

Research on gifted students and the issues related to their investigation have revealed several personality factors. Meanwhile, EI issues have consistently emerged as contributing factors that hinder many gifted students from realizing their potential. Not all of the gifted children experience similar issues. Nonetheless, considerable research has identified a combination of the following contributing reasons: dilemmas about abilities and talents, personal decisions about family, ambivalence of parents and teachers toward developing high levels of potential, and decisions about duty and caring (prioritizing the needs of others) as opposed to nurturing personal, religious, and social issues (Reis, 2002).

Social and EI issues occur across the life span of gifted individuals. Some of these issues affect the youngest, whereas some are only apparent to older gifted individuals who have become involved in serious relationships in their college or graduate school years or had children later in their lives (Reis, 2002). Older gifted individuals resolve personal issues relating to the ability and social issues experienced by their younger counterparts. Understanding that some of these dilemmas cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of everyone involved is important as well. Some dilemmas are resolved because of the changes in the life of a gifted individual, such as the maturation of his children, the dissolution of a relationship, the reemergence of other relationships, and changes in work/home environments. Therefore, when discussing social and emotional issues, studying giftedness without discussing gifted students is difficult, if not impossible. The reason is that many young gifted students believe that they can ~~do~~ "it all" or ~~have~~ "it all," whereas many older gifted individuals have learned that they cannot. These gifted students are extremely bright in school, but they tend to become ambivalent about their future as they become older, causing their hopes and career dreams to waver. Preventing this scenario and learning more about why hopes fade are the reasons why significant research about gifted individual continues (Reis, 2002).

Several studies have suggested that the belief of talented students in their own ability is undermined or diminishes during childhood or adolescence. In a recent qualitative study on five talented adolescents, not one participant attributed his success in school to extraordinary ability (Callahan, Cunningham, & Plucker, 1994). Other recent studies have indicated that some gifted students recognize their abilities

despite acknowledging their fears about the future (Reis, Hébert, Diaz, Maxfield, & Ratley, 1995).

The importance of EI is gradually being acknowledged, and the number of studies in this field is increasing. This research explores the EI levels of gifted students and the difference in such levels based on gender.

Halıçınarlı and Bender (2006), examined the relationship between gender and intelligence among samples from three different universities. They argued that EI was significantly related to gender. They reported that personal, interpersonal, and adaptability EI scores significantly varied, and the scores of female students were higher than those of male students. No significant relationship was found among stress management, mood EI scores, and gender. Austin et al. (2005), conducted a study on medical students and revealed that the EI of female students was significantly higher than that of male students.

Harrod and Scheer (2005), measured the EI of 200 youngsters aged 16 to 19 years. They compared the intelligence scores of the respondents with their respective demographic qualities (age, gender, household income, education level of parents, and place of residence) and reported a positive relationship between the levels of EI and gender. A positive relationship was also found between the educational levels of parents and household income. Moreover, Harrod and Scheer (2005), indicated that the EI scores of women significantly varied from those of men. Women showed higher levels of EI. No significant difference was found between EI score and age, place of residence, and household income. The important difference was confirmed to be based on EI for the educational status of the family. In other words, the EI level improved with the increased level of education. In conclusion, the preceding studies

revealed that demographic qualities are also associated with EI (Yelkikalan et al., 2012).

With the rapid development in this century, the students and the public face a wave of globalization and secularism as well as several other challenges. Thus, emotional self-control must be prevented from being affected by the flow of negative and bad elements (Yahaya, Yahaya Mo Lee, Boon, & Hashim, 2012). A high level of EI helps maintain a state of harmony and balance in oneself; it also improves the self-confidence of an individual in dealing with the challenges of living and learning in educational institutions. Emotional intelligence can contribute to the academic achievement of a student in the learning process (Goleman, 1996; Elias, Ubrico, Reese et al., 1992, Svetlana, 2007). In the current study, the researcher applied the elements of the theories proposed by Goleman, Mayer, and Salovey and determined whether the identified five elements of EI (i.e., self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills) contribute to academic achievement. Applying the aforementioned theories with the five elements mentioned will benefit Saudi Arabia and the world as a whole by increasing the levels of EI and achievements among gifted students.

Emotional intelligence has become an extensively explored topic of psychological studies in recent years, particularly in terms of how it affects the academic achievement of gifted students. In essence, gifted students are comparable to normal people; hence, anything that affects the effectiveness of people's mind also affects their academic achievement. In fact, experts now believe that a person's emotional intelligence quotient (EQ) may be more important than their IQ and is

certainly a better predictor of success, quality of relationships, and overall happiness (Royale Scuderi, 2011).

The concept of EI has evolved over the years, from its inception of being called “social intelligence” in the 1930s to “emotional strength” in the mid-20th century, and to its current terminology, “emotional intelligence.” Rabindranath (2014), indicated that with regard to gifted students, EI in layman’s terms refers to the level of ability of students in recognizing and understanding their emotions and reactions (self-awareness), managing, controlling, and adapting their emotions, moods, reactions, and responses (self-management), harnessing their emotions to motivate themselves to take appropriate action, commit, follow-through, and work toward the achievement of their goals (motivation), discerning the feelings of others, understanding their emotions, and relating to others more effectively (empathy), and building relationships, relating to others in social situations, leading, negotiating conflict, and working as part of a team (social skills).

Emotional intelligence is deemed to be important in this study because a higher EI helps gifted students become stronger internal motivators, allowing them to reduce their own procrastination, increase their self-confidence, and improve their ability to focus on their goal of academic achievement. Emotional intelligence also allows gifted students to develop better networks of support, overcome setbacks, and persevere with a more resilient outlook. This situation is supported by the fact that our ability to delay gratification and recognize long-term effects directly influences our ability to succeed (Rabindranath, 2014).

As an important predictor of student satisfaction with life, EI has a critical role in the overall quality of the personal and professional lives of gifted students,

and an even more critical role than the actual measure of brain intelligence (Fernandes & Rego, 2004). Tools and technology can help gifted students learn and master information. However, nothing can replace one's ability to learn, manage, and master his own emotions and those of others. Fernandes and Rego (2004), also reported that EI is an important predictor of student satisfaction with life, health, and academic achievement.

Academic achievement is important for gifted students because it is strongly linked to the positive outcomes they value. Students who are academically successful and with high levels of education are more likely to be employed, have stable jobs, and have more employment opportunities than those with less education. Moreover, such students are likely to earn higher salaries, have health insurance, be less dependent on social assistance; they are less likely to engage in criminal activities, are more active citizens and charitable volunteers, as well as healthier and happier. Academic achievement is important because working people must possess higher levels of education for them to efficiently tackle the technologically demanding occupations of the future. Carmeli (2007), indicated that the EI of senior managers is significantly related to their work attitude, work behavior, work outcomes, and job satisfaction.

Academically successful gifted students have a higher self-esteem and lower levels of depression and anxiety; they are also socially inclined and less likely to abuse alcohol and substances. Positive self-esteem and self-confidence are critical factors in committing to academic achievement (Regier, 2011).

Family status variables, such as socio-economic status and parents' level of education, have been regarded as predictors of children's academic achievement.

Research has increasingly suggested that instead of being directly associated with children's academic achievement, the family status variables are part of a larger constellation of psychological and sociological variables that influence the school outcomes of children (Joan, 2009). Parents who were involved in their child's education and family activities saw positive results in the behavior, academics, and social interactions of their children. Students who master basic reading, writing, and mathematics skills are less likely to fail in school and are more likely to develop the thinking skills they require to complete their high school and post-secondary education (Joan, 2009). People must also be confident in these basic academic skills to find and maintain jobs that could provide them with a steady income, benefits, and opportunities for advancement. Khokhar and Kush (2009), reported that high levels of EI and academic achievement among executives improve the quality of work performance.

Academic achievement is important for the successful development of gifted students. Students who do well in school are more capable of transitioning into adulthood and achieving occupational and economic success. Qualter, Whiteley, Hutchinson, and Pope (2007), argued that higher levels of EI facilitate the ability of students to transition from primary to secondary school.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The academic achievements of gifted students in Saudi Arabia have been a concern to stakeholders and policy makers in the education sector of the country. Thus, the government has implemented several measures at various levels toward improving the academic achievement of gifted students. These measures have been focused on

transferring gifted students to special schools. However, Al-Amari (2005), argued that the goals have not been achieved thus far, and reported the decreased levels of academic achievement among gifted students. This emerging state requires the appropriate attention of the MOE to obtain a better understanding of the causes of such failures. Bondagjy (2000), indicated that out of the approximately four million students in Saudi Arabia, roughly 80,000 (2%) are gifted. Functional specialized programs can provide for merely half of the actual number (King Abdul Aziz et al., *Foundation for the Gifted Journal*, 1999).

Bondagjy (2000), reported that the growing number of gifted students has increased the concern about the capacity of the program to cover merely half of the total number of gifted students in the country. In other words, only approximately 40,000 gifted students would benefit from the specialized programs. Nonetheless, this number is even expected to increase at a rate of 5%, the same rate of increase in the population. Bondagjy (2000), added that the present foundation cannot cater for the increasing number of gifted students in Saudi Arabia, and that the number of gifted students in the country would appear to be higher than 200,000 if 5% of the population of gifted students are identified. The Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE) (Saudi MOE, 2007), issued the same report, indicating that the number of gifted students who receive the benefit of the specialized programs in Saudi Arabian schools is significantly lower. In this case, studying the influence of emotional intelligence towards academic achievement among gifted students will be of great importance more especially to the Ministry of Education (MOE) programs in Saudi Arabia.

A rigorous study indicated that the current curriculum for gifted students in Saudi Arabia is designed to address the important issues regarding the development of emotional intelligence of gifted students and other aspects related to their academic achievement. Therefore, the EI skills of intermediate school students, which have been observed as a major determinant of academic achievement, must be developed and enhanced to solve the problem of poor academic achievement among them. This is because a student may recover from physical pain or injury, but may never recover from the terror and degradation of his emotional state (Kahtani, 2013). Although the education of gifted and talented individuals has been intensively investigated worldwide, little has been written about the education of the same population in Saudi Arabia and throughout the Arab countries. The status of the education of gifted individuals remains vague and unclear even for educators themselves more especially in the issue of their gender (Obaidli & Ali, 2006).

Stumpf and Stanley (1996) explored gender-related differences on the College Board's Achievement examinations. They reported that male students had moderately higher scores on physics, chemistry, and computer science tests, while females had slightly higher language examinations. They noted that the patterns were stable across the last decade, but gender differences were narrowing. Feingold (1988) and Linn and Hyde (1989) concluded that a decrease in gender differences occurred in mathematics and science as measured by standardized measures during the last three decades. However, in a meta-analysis, the magnitude of gender differences on tests of mathematics achievement and aptitude was studied as a function of the selectivity of the sample. Results indicated that problems still exist regarding gifted

females and standardized tests (Hyde & Fennema, 1990), the more highly selective the sample, the larger the gender difference favoring males.

Explaining about Gender schema theory, Sandra Bem (1981) introduced the theory as a cognitive theory to explain how individuals become gendered in society, and how sex-linked characteristics are maintained and transmitted to other members of a culture (Bem, 1981). Gender-associated information is predominantly transmuted through society by way of schemata, or networks of information that allow for some information to be more easily assimilated than others. Bem (1983) argues that there are individual differences in the degree to which people hold these gender schemata. These differences are manifested via the degree to which individuals are sex-typed.

New initiatives tailored to the Saudi environment are urgently needed. These initiatives must improve the academic achievement of gifted students and identify the factors that influence such achievement. This need has been emphasized by several Saudi researchers (Kahtani, 2013). The majority of the available studies have focused on different aspects of the problem. However, these research inquiries may contain information gaps that do not match the Saudi environment. Therefore, this study aims to address this research gap. The intelligent and creative individuals were categorized based on the test given by the Saudi MOE and were then required to attend special schools in Jeddah (Saudi MOE, 2013). Numerous Saudi researchers, including Algamdi (2007), affirmed that the concerned parties should focus on gifted students and monitor their academic achievement level. Moreover, the authorities must establish scientific educational mechanisms for sustaining the development of gifted students, including the detection of factors that may hinder their performance.

The researcher determined that the scores of the gifted students varied in the past three years because of their emotions and because these scores have also been affected by the school, society, or family. The total scores of 150 students (78 male and 72 female) were used by the researcher for the duration of three years from the examination records to determine the level of EI and academic achievement among gifted students in Saudi Arabia. This undertaking was realized in consideration of the understanding of EI and achievement motivation theories. The observations and experiences of the researcher also contributed in identifying the research gap in this area of study.

The basic social needs of gifted children are similar to those of other children, and they share certain social needs with their age mates (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Neihart et al., 2002). Moreover, a few social issues that are more common in gifted students appear with some regularity among the gifted population. In general, these social issues are natural outcomes of the advancement of these youngsters compared with their age peers and school environments. Several of these issues may provide the readers with ideas of what to expect, primarily when a mismatch exists between peers and school.

Brighter students are more inclined to seek older friends, have fewer friends than they wish, and believe that “being smart” increases the difficulty in making new friends (Janos, Marwood, & Robinson, 1985). Similarly, children who perceived themselves as “different” reported that they have few friends (Janos, Fung, & Robinson, 1985), even when the difference they identify is what most people consider positive.

The suboptimal means of dealing with school boredom include daydreaming, impatience and irritability with fellow students who move so slowly or fail to understand the ~~obvious~~,” rebellion against homework, and ~~meltdowns~~” (among the younger students). Gifted students sometimes conclude that they no longer need to practice certain concepts, such as multiplication and spelling rules, because they already understand them. This attitude causes these students to fail in mastering such concepts to the degree required for their efficient use, thus increasing negativity.

The aforementioned issues are not inherent in gifted children; instead, they emerge from the disconnection between the level and pace of the children’s development and the environments in which they live. Thus, the solution to these problems is obvious; that is, correcting the mismatch. These problems may also be minimized or prevented by developing and providing special school programs that can satisfy the needs of gifted students or by giving these students the opportunities to move into schools and social situations with older students. No ~~solution~~” is foolproof. Nevertheless, the educational approaches that simultaneously provide appropriate challenge and access to compatible peers are effective not only academically, but also socially (Kulik, 2004; Rinn, 2006; Shaunessy, Suldo, Hardesty, & Shaffer, 2006; Shore, Cornell, Robinson, & Ward, 1991). In addition to the cognitive issues, such as the aforementioned fears and concerns that are merely a part of being intellectually gifted, inherent personal variables may also impinge on the social experience of gifted children.

Several authors (Silverman, 1993; Dabrowski, 1964; Piechowski, 1997) have suggested that gifted individuals are commonly more sensitive and introverted than the non-gifted ones; hence, they may be more independent of and less needy in social

relationships than others. Extensive research with the Myers–Briggs inventory (Mills & Parker, 1998; Sak, 2004), confirms this observation. Introverts do not tend to win popularity contests; rather, they may be more comfortable in engaging in solitary pursuits (compatible with high achievement) and can maintain a more even keel than those tossed about by the vicissitudes of turbulent social agendas.

Dabrowski (1964), asserted that the development of gifted individuals consists of a series of stages, each of which is terminated by a process of disintegration and succeeded by a more mature adaptation and deepening self-knowledge. Dabrowski (1964), added that the “psychic excitabilities” accompanying development are evident in psychomotor, sensual, intellectual, imaginal, and emotional domains and inevitably impinge on the relationships of individuals with others. Physical tensions and restlessness may interfere with calm interactions. Moreover, gifted children may be more sensitive to minor slights from others and instances in which they pick up on the aspects of unfairness, either in their immediate experience, events in the society, or in the world at large. Their subsequent crusades for “justice” may not endear them to those they regard as the perpetrators (Dabrowski, 1964; Piechowski, 1999).

Perfectionism is an exceptionally controversial topic in the field of special education, and it is one of the social skills of gifted students. This characteristic partly stems from the varying definitions of the concept. Some authors define perfectionism simply as high aspirations, the interest in doing one’s best whenever possible, and the commitment to success but comfort with lower standards when appropriate. Meanwhile, others view perfectionism as an inherently neurotic trait, a “compulsive and unrelenting strain toward impossible goals” (Schuler, 2002). Still

others view perfectionism as segmented into various components, some of which are more destructive than others. For example, Hewitt and Flett (1991) pointed out that the high standards we set for ourselves and others are sometimes positive and certainly less neurotically debilitating than the feeling that one must live up to the expectations of others. (By contrast, insisting on high standards for one's family and friends may have its downside in those relationships, but is not necessarily debilitating.)

Gifted students who continue to develop their talents certainly set high goals for themselves (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993); they would not endure the hours of practice without setting high goals (Ericsson, Nandagopal, & Roring, 2005) and demonstrating commitment that is required for success. However, in the context of a social setting in which their peers have neither the aspirations nor the commitment they have, gifted students must endure criticism. Despite the obvious positive outcomes of successful talent development (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993; Subotnik & Jarvin, 2005; von Rossum & Gagné, 2006), the aspiring students may be isolated from their classmates both by being actively excluded from friendships and because of time commitments that interfere with ordinary contacts.

This study verified the current research problem by interviewing four teachers of intermediate schools in the study area prior to the commencement of the actual study. The interview questions were primarily focused on the influence of EI on the academic achievement of gifted students in Saudi Arabia. Three of the four teachers reported the lack of a basic teaching method, which could affect the academic achievement of students. Meanwhile, all teachers agreed that the existing teaching methods and learning tools, such as e-learning, are not in demand among

the gifted students. They also acknowledged the problems they confront when helping their students improve their EI.

Nearly 60% of the teachers of gifted students in Saudi Arabia encounter difficulties in helping their students develop their EI and academic achievement in the teaching and learning processes. Thus, the issue of whether the identified five elements of EI (i.e., self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills) could contribute to the academic achievement of gifted students should be investigated. Based on these reasons, the researcher aimed to explore the influence of EI on the academic achievement of gifted students in Saudi Arabia.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate the influence of emotional intelligence on academic achievement among gifted students;
 - a) To investigate the influence of self-awareness on academic achievement among gifted students;
 - b) To investigate the influence of self-regulation on academic achievement among gifted students;
 - c) To investigate the influence of motivation on academic achievement among gifted students;
 - d) To investigate the influence of empathy on academic achievement among gifted students;
 - e) To investigate the influence of social skill on academic achievement among gifted students;

2. To determine which of the emotional intelligence element would be the best predictor of academic achievement.
3. To examine the significant difference of emotional intelligence among gifted students based on gender.
4. To describe the concept of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills among gifted students in Saudi Arabia.
5. To obtain suggestions from the teachers that could be adopted to improve emotional intelligence among gifted students in Saudi Arabia.

1.5 Research Questions

1. Is there any significant influence of emotional intelligence on academic achievement among gifted students?
 - a. Is there any significant influence of self-awareness on academic achievement among gifted students?
 - b. Is there any significant influence of self-regulation on academic achievement among gifted students?
 - c. Is there any significant influence of motivation on academic achievement among gifted students?
 - d. Is there any significant influence of empathy on academic achievement among gifted students?
 - e. Is there any significant influence of social skills on academic achievement among gifted students?
2. Which of the emotional intelligence element would be the best predictor of academic achievement?

3. Is there any significant difference of emotional intelligence among gifted students based on gender?
4. How can the concepts of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills be described among gifted students in Saudi Arabia?
5. What are the suggestions that could be obtained to improve emotional intelligence among gifted students in Saudi Arabia?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

This study intended to test the following null hypotheses:

Ho1. Emotional intelligence does not positively affect academic achievement of gifted students.

Ho1a Self-awareness does not positively affect academic achievement of gifted students.

Ho1b Self-regulation does not positively affect academic achievement of gifted students.

Ho1c Motivation does not positively affect academic achievement of gifted students.

Ho1d Empathy does not positively affect academic achievement of gifted students.

Ho1e Social skill does not positively affect academic achievement of gifted students.

Ho2. There is no significant difference between emotional intelligence level of male and female students.

Ho2a There is no significant difference between self-awareness level of male and female students.

Ho2b There is no significant difference between self-regulation level of male and female students.

Ho2c There is no significant difference between motivation level of male and female students.

Ho2d There is no significant difference between empathy level of male and female students.

Ho2e There is no a significant difference between social skill of male and female students.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

This section discusses the independent and the dependent variables which were investigated in the research and illustrates the relationship between them. The study wanted to know the influence of emotional intelligence towards academic achievement among gifted students in Saudi Arabia. The framework in Figure 1.1 illustrates that the independent variables are conceptualized as five variables, namely, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills which are all aspects of emotional intelligence. The dependent variable is conceptualized as academic achievement. The independent and dependent variables were both conceptualized through personal and social competencies because of the EI of gifted students in Saudi schools who were categorized based on their gender, following the review of Goleman's (1995), emotional intelligence theory and Achievement